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DEPT FOR PRM/ANE - KINSEY, CURTIS; ALSO FOR EAP/CM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREF PHUM HK

SUBJECT: HONG KONG FUNDING PROPOSAL FOR TAFT FUND FOR

REFUGEES

REF: (A) STATE 14280 (B) WEBER-KINSEY/CURTIS E-MAILS

¶1. Summary: At PRM/ANE request, Post has coordinated with Hong Kong's Christian Action NGO on their proposal for a project to increase the capacity of their Chungking Mansions Service Center to address the needs of vulnerable women and children among Hong Kong's refugee and asylum-seeker population. The grant would focus on protecting and supporting women and children who may be in flight from domestic violence, and in preventing exploitation of otherwise vulnerable women by the sex trade. Besides helping this vulnerable population, this grant would be a visible sign of our commitment to help Hong Kong improve its handling of refugees and asylum seekers, concerns about which we have expressed in our Human Rights Report. End summary.

¶2. Recipient: Christian Action is a registered non-profit, non-government organization in Hong Kong. Founded by the Rev. Karl Stumpf in the 1950s, the organization has previously worked to support Vietnamese "boat people" in Hong Kong in the 1980s. The group's "aim is to promote the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged with particular emphasis on displaced persons, irrespective of race, gender, religion or nationality." Current activities include: Direct advice and advocacy; emergency support for families and singles of both genders; education for children; after-school support and social integration programs; recreational activities; assistance for unaccompanied minor-age refugees; therapeutic support; food program; and a limited counseling support program.

¶3. Proposal: Christian Action's complete proposal was submitted electronically to PRM/ANE. Its general goals include public advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong, providing protection for women and children fleeing domestic or other violence or exploitation, and offering financial, emotional, physical and spiritual support to refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, the group hopes its support for women will help protect them from falling into exploitation in the sex trade because of economic hardship.

¶4. Justification: Hong Kong is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and claims for refuge are processed by the UNHCR representative in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's process for dealing with asylum seekers has been found by the UN and Hong Kong's courts to be inadequate, and an extensive policy review is underway. Pending resolution of these issues, refugees and asylum seekers are left in a legal limbo, with limited support provided by the Hong Kong government through its welfare system. While the courts have ruled refugees and asylum seekers cannot be forbidden to work pending resolution of their cases, there is not a substantial legal or regulatory framework in place yet to normalize this status. Since these concerns have and continue to be expressed by the USG in our human rights reporting process, support for NGOs providing service to this population serves to highlight that

we are doing more than merely leveling criticism.

¶5. Grant Authority: Post's Public Affairs Office has the authority and the capacity to award a grant to the proposed recipient.

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